

Redefining the Field Artillery Task

By MAJ Loreto V. Borce, Jr, CPT Justin P. Thorkildsen and CPT Gordon D. Rutledge,
Fire Support Division, JRTC Operations Group

The United States Army has been fighting the Global War on Terrorism for over 14 years, and the direct support (DS) field artillery battalion's ability to conduct proper fires planning leading to accurate and timely fires has suffered. Many field artillery battalions have conducted more non-standard missions than doctrinal field artillery missions during the past decade of combat. They have conducted everything from counterinsurgency operations to assuming the responsibilities of land owners and to being used as transportation companies. Many field artillery Leaders are unfamiliar with and inexperienced in developing a Field artillery Support Plan (FASP). When brigade combat teams (BCTs) execute Decisive Action Training Environment (DATE) rotations at the Joint Readiness Training Center (JRTC) at Fort Polk, Louisiana, the field artillery battalion plays an increasingly prominent role in the BCT and its effects (or lack of effects) are felt across all aspects of the mission. Unified Land Operations (ULO) are defined as "the continuous, simultaneous combinations of offensive, defensive, and stability or defense support of civil authorities' tasks" (Army Doctrine Publication 3-0, 2011). The field artillery battalion supports this by facilitating the brigade commanders' ability to seize, retain, or exploit the initiative in an offensive, defensive or stability operation. However, after observing numerous field artillery battalions at the JRTC, a common trend is that field artillery battalions are not timely and accurate in providing fires. During mission analysis and through course of action development, the most important portion of the FASP is often undervalued and overlooked: the Field Artillery Task (FAT). Every function of the field artillery battalion is driven to ensure that each FAT can be successfully supported with timely and accurate fires.

This article will discuss the importance of developing meaningful FATs around which a feasible, acceptable, suitable, distinguishable and complete FASP can be created to support the brigade commander in achieving his overall objectives.

How Fire Support Tasks (FSTs) are developed

Critical to understanding how a FAT is developed, we also need to understand how Fire Support Tasks (FST) are developed and the intrinsic relationships be-

tween the two. Both the FAT and FST are created during the Military Decision Making Process (MDMP). In our doctrine, fires planning is a continuous process and central to this process is the development of FSTs to support the brigade mission.

After the mission analysis brief is concluded, the brigade commander (BDE CDR) will issue his initial planning guidance for fires (including desired tactical tasks and concerns that will drive restrictions on employment of fires). The Brigade Fire Support Officer (BDE FSO) can then develop and propose to the field artillery battalion commander/fire support coordinator (FSCOORD) FSTs that support each of the BDE CDR's desired tactical tasks for fires. During the development of the FSTs, the BDE FSO must have a direct and open line of communication with the field artillery battalion operations officer (BN S3) to ensure that each FST to be assigned to the field artillery battalion is individually and collectively supportable based upon positioning, timing, ammunition availability, and combat power remaining.

The importance of the relationship between the BDE FSO and battalion S3 cannot be over stressed, especially in a DATE rotation. They should over communicate with each other to ensure that brigade and the field artillery battalion share a Common Operational Picture (COP) for field artillery assets (including general support and reinforcing units). This dialogue between the BDE FSO and BN S3 occurring early in the brigade MDMP process will ensure that the field artillery battalion will achieve the BDE CDR's desired effects. Failure to achieve a FST may require the brigade commander to alter his tactical or operational plan; each FST is a critical task that must be accomplished to prevent risk of failure.

Simultaneous with the development and approval of each FST, the BDE FSO and his staff will develop target description, trigger, location, observer, delivery asset, attack guidance, and communications plan (TTLODAC) for each FST ensuring that each is executable and synchronized with the other brigade warfighting functions in both time and space. In this way the FST, with included TTLODAC, is handed off to the maneuver battalions for target refinement and to the field artillery battalion to

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enable parallel planning during FAT and FASP development.

Example of a fully developed FAT

No FAT in Doctrine?

Why FATs are good for you.

Understanding the importance of a FAT means understanding the role of the field artillery on the battlefield. “The field artillery has the role of destroying, defeating, or disrupting the enemy with integrated fires to enable the maneuver commanders to dominate in unified land operations.” (Army Techniques Publication 3-09.23, 2015) A FAT is a task, purpose, and execution whose success can be assessed. The task is a type of fire to be provided. The purpose is a tactical effect to be placed on an enemy formation or unit. The execution is simply TTLODAC data and the assessment is described in terms of methods of performance and effectiveness.

The brigade operations order and annex D provide the field artillery battalion the FSTs to support the brigade scheme of maneuver. During mission analysis the field artillery battalion staff must take each FST and develop them into a FAT to allow the commander to visualize all of his required tasks and provide guidance for development of the FASP. The most important portion of the FASP details when, where, and with what ammunition the brigade’s field artillery assets must be in order to support the brigade commander’s FSTs.

Phase 2: Attack							
Phase 2a: Build up of Combat Power in PAA BLUE							
FAT 1: Provide Suppressive Fires on 841 st Armored Formations JAAT (support BDE FST 1);							
PURPOSE 1: Allow CCA and CAS to destroy enemy motorized formations crossing international border, along PL Betty							
EXECUTION:							
FAPOF: 1-71, 1-87, 2-22							
C BTRY POF to 1-71, B BTRY POF to 2-22; POF to 1-87							
FAT	T	T	L	O	D	A	C
FAT1	KC0001	Identification of 30% of 841 st Motorized Elements Crossing PL Betty	18T VP 506 856	P: 1-71 A: CCA	P: C BTRY A: A BTRY C: B BTRY	P: BTRY 2 HE/PD (155mm) A: BTRY 4 HE/PD 105mm	P: 3-6 Fires Dig A: 3-6 Fires Voice
FAT1	KC0005	Identification of 30% of 841 st Motorized Elements crossing PL Betty	18T VP 521 824	P: 1-71 A: CCA	P: C BTRY A: A BTRY C: B BTRY	P: BTRY 2 HE/PD (155mm) A: BTRY 4 HE/PD 105mm	P: 3-6 Fires Dig A: 3-6 Fires Voice
FAT1	KC0010	Identification of 30% of 841 st motorized Elements crossing PL Betty	18T VP 536 805	P: 1-71 A: CCA	P: C BTRY A: A BTRY C: B BTRY	P: BTRY 2 HE/PD (155mm) A: BTRY 4 HE/PD 105mm	P: 3-6 Fires Dig A: 3-6 Fires Voice
Position Guidance: C BTRY PAA BLUE 18T VP 4089 7612 AOF 1000; A BTRY PAA BLUE 18T VP 4089 7612 AOF 1300 O/O RED 18T VP 4755 8085 AOF 2200; B BTRY PAA BLUE 18T VP 4089 7612 AOF 0600 O/O PAA PURPLE 18T VP 4450 8200 AOF 0800							
Restrictions/FSCMs: FSCL along PL Betty; CFL along PL Archie; NFA and CFZ over all friendly unit locations; RFA over villages of Razish, Guba, Barasu, and Nabran							
ASSESSMENT:							
MoE1: 30% of 841 st Motorized BTG vehicles mobility or firepower kills; MoP: Suppression of 841 st Motorized vehicles achieved in under 10 minutes							

Phase 2a: Build up of Combat Power in PAA BLUE							
FAT 2: Provide counter-fire on enemy fire support assets in AO WARRIOR							
PURPOSE 2: Deny 841 st Motorized BTG fire support assets the ability to mass indirect fires on 1BCT							
EXECUTION:							
FAPOF: 1-71, 1-87, 2-22							
C BTRY POF to 1-71, B BTRY POF to 2-22, POF to 1-87							
FAT	T	T	L	O	D	A	C
FAT2	KC 0020	Identification of 841 st MRL units	18T VP 578 858	P: Q36 A: UAS	P: C BTRY A: A BTRY C: B BTRY	P: BTRY 3 HE/PD (155mm) A: BTRY 3 HE/PD (105mm)	P: 3-6 Fires Dig A: 3-6 Fires Voice
FAT2	KC 0025	Identification of 841 st 155mm SP units	18T VP 588 871	P: Q36 A: UAS	P: C BTRY A: A BTRY C: B BTRY	P: BTRY 3 HE/PD (155mm) A: BTRY 3 HE/PD (105mm)	P: 3-6 Fires Dig A: 3-6 Fires Voice
FAT2	KC 0030	Identification of 841 st MRL units	18T VP 505 910	P: Q36 A: UAS	P: C BTRY A: A BTRY C: B BTRY	P: BTRY 3 HE/PD (155mm) A: BTRY 3 HE/PD (105mm)	P: 3-6 Fires Dig A: 3-6 Fires Voice
FAT2	KC 0040	Identification of 841 st 155mm SP units	18T VP 515 915	P: Q36 A: UAS	P: C BTRY A: A BTRY C: B BTRY	P: BTRY 3 HE/PD (155mm) A: BTRY 3 HE/PD (105mm)	P: 3-6 Fires Dig A: 3-6 Fires Voice
Position Guidance: C BTRY PAA BLUE 18T VP 4089 7612 AOF 1000; A BTRY PAA BLUE 18T VP 4089 7612 AOF 1300 O/O RED 18T VP 4755 8085 AOF 2200; B BTRY PAA BLUE 18T VP 4089 7612 AOF 0600 O/O PAA PURPLE 18T VP 4450 8200 AOF 0800							
Restrictions/FSCMs: FSCL along PL Betty; CFL along PL Archie; NFA and CFZ over all friendly unit locations; RFA over villages of Razish, Guba, Barasu, and Nabran							

ATP 3-09.23 (that supersedes FM 3-09.23) does not mention development of FATs. The current doctrine only talks about the development of FSTs. While similar in structure and language, the intent between the two is different and this short gap in our doctrine is preventing units from achieving the brigade commander’s intent.

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"The field artillery has the role of destroying, defeating, or disrupting the enemy with integrated fires to enable the maneuver commanders to dominate in unified land operations." (Army Techniques Publication 3-09.23, 2015) U.S. Army photo released.

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Using the Decide, Detect, Deliver, Assess (D3A) framework, brigade FSTs drive the various warfighting functions of brigade to decide, detect and assess, while the FAT is focused entirely on delivery and assessment.


ATP 3-09.23 needs to re-address the lack of FAT development and place back into our doctrine how to develop FATs to support the brigade mission. In addition, it needs to explain why it is critical to both field artillery and maneuver mission accomplishment.

Conclusions

During numerous rotations at the JRTC, observations indicate that units develop ad hoc and incomplete FASPs resulting in subordinate units not knowing their specified tasks or the intent backing them. The importance of developing a FASP based upon clear and achievable FATs is crucial for the success of the field artillery battalion and brigade combat team in the DATE.

In conclusion, the field artillery battalion must be able to provide a clear and concise intent, task, and purpose to its subordinate firing units. The FAT thoroughly

achieves this requirement. Using FATs derived from brigade FSTs, a FASP that is feasible, acceptable, suitable, distinguishable and complete can be developed by the field artillery battalion that wholly supports the brigade commander's intent and requirements.

Finally, without FATs being included into doctrine, a critical process within the field artillery battalion remains missing that will ultimately degrade the effectiveness of the branch as we move back towards synchronized massed fires against a near-peer competitor. Hopefully, this article will spark discussion within the field artillery community to bridge this doctrinal gap. 

References

- Army Doctrine Publication 3-0. (2011). Unified Land Operations. Washington, DC: United States Department of the Army.*
- Army Techniques Publication 3-09.23. (2015). Field Artillery Cannon Battalion. Washington, DC: United States Department of the Army.*